

~~British-Japanese Diplomatic Relations
as Appeared in Eden-Shigemitsu Conversation Feb. 1941~~

Secret Code Message to MATSUOKA (No. 77, London)

~~General~~ File No. 3318 Telegram in Cipher London to Foreign Ministry

Despatched: 8 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) afternoon

Received: 9 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) afternoon

Jurisdiction: European Section

To: Foreign Minister MATSUOKA From: Ambassador SHIGEMITSU

No. 77

I visited Foreign Secretary Eden on the 7th, at his request, and had with him a conversation on the basis of a written statement as per ~~File~~ No. 78. Following this, I gave him my personal reply only, as per telegram No. 79. Please favor me with your instructions regarding the treatment of the Foreign Secretary's representation or reply to it. (End)

~~General~~ File No. 3320 Abridged: London to Foreign Ministry

Despatched: 8 February, 1941 (SHOWA 16) afternoon

Received: 9 February, 1941 (SHOWA 16) afternoon

Jurisdiction: European Section

To: Foreign Minister MATSUOKA From: Ambassador SHIGEMITSU

No. 78

1. In reply to the desire expressed by Ambassador Craigie on his first meeting with the Foreign Minister following the formation of the KONOYE Cabinet that the new Cabinet, too, would cope with the relations between the two countries in such a cooperative spirit and by such friendly means as were done by the previous cabinet, Foreign Minister MATSUOKA replied that the general policy for the future was now under careful consideration. On that occasion, he also stated as his unofficial intention that, between Japan and Britain, there was no hope of any general settlement in Anglo-Japanese relations, and that tension in Anglo-Japanese relations was unavoidable in the future.

Two days after this interview, there came the mass arrest

of Englishmen in Japan and Chosen, and a joint statement of the War Minister and the Justice Minister was issued, giving the impression that a general British espionage system existed in Japan. However, as the results of trials, they were convicted of only trifles and it was found that no actual espionage existed.

This is the outline of the situation in July and August, but in September Japan concluded the Tripartite Alliance and openly sided with Britain's enemies, Germany and Italy. The public speeches of the statesmen and the tone of the press are more and more increasing Britain's anxiety.

2. In his public statement Foreign Minister MATSUOKA, stated that the Tripartite Treaty was a pact for the sake of peace. Your Excellency also said that the main object of Japan is to overcome the difficulties of the Chinese problem and restore order in East Asia, but judging from facts which have developed since then and from all indications of Japan's expanding her sphere of influence in order to "dominate," it is difficult to understand the foregoing explanation, to be frank about it. (to be continued)

General
File No. 3325

Abridged: London to Foreign Ministry

Despatched: 8 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) afternoon
Received: 9 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) evening

Jurisdiction: European Section

(Telegram No. 78 continued)

In this connection the British Government desires to call attention to the fact that it considers Foreign Minister MATSUOKA's reference to Japan's "aspirations" toward Burma to be an "improper reference."

Next in regard to the problem of French Indo-China and Thailand also, the recent situation has not alleviated the tension in the Far East. The British Government is unable to recognize the claim made by Foreign Minister MATSUOKA that Japan alone possesses the right of mediating the disputes in the Far East.

If the object of mediation is simply to bring about the solution of disputes, Britain, like all other countries, welcomes such mediation. However, we have disquieting information that Japan has

exerted pressure on French Indo-China and Thailand, and we have come to harbour the suspicion that Japan is utilizing this mediation as an excuse for securing for herself far-reaching political and military concessions from these two countries. For instance, press dispatches have it that Camranh Bay and all of the existing airdromes will be offered for the use of the Japanese.

3. The most important point is the recent report of Ambassador Craigie, informing us that "there is a general feeling in Japan that a crisis in the Far East will develop within the next few weeks." What does this mean? Who is going to challenge and against whom? Is it some kind of a "forward moving" plotted by Japan? Are we to believe that it will be carried out simultaneously with the German offensive against the British homeland? And if this be true, should Britain deem her dominions in the Far East as being on the brink of danger from Japanese attack? I am at a loss to understand the situation. Since Japan possesses a geographically advantageous position, she can stand aloof, if she desires, from the ravages of war. Moreover, she is of all countries the least threatened by England. (to be continued)

General
File No. 3340

Abridged: London to Foreign Ministry

Despatched: 8 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) afternoon
Received: 9 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) evening

Jurisdiction: European Section

(Telegram No. 78 continued)

If I am permitted to speak my mind freely, there are many reasons why Japan, after four years of the China Affair would be better off if she did not enter into any further war with other countries. It is my opinion that, although we can understand Japan's reasons for holding an unfriendly attitude towards Great Britain and the United States of America, it is an indisputable fact that anti-British feeling in Japan was, as history shows, the strongest at the time when Anglo-Japanese relationship was the most intimate. I am quite at a loss to understand the reasons why Ambassador Craigie reported to us that the scope of a crisis is developing in Japan. "It seems that the purpose of Japanese statesmen is to show that some gigantic convulsion of upheaval is about to take place."

4. I am sure that you will understand the impossibility of disregarding the above indications and warnings, and the necessity of clearly informing you of our standpoint. Great Britain possesses dominions in the Far East. Although we do not entertain any intention of aggressive acts, we also have no intention whatsoever of sacrificing these possessions under the orders of whatever country. Furthermore, it is impossible to acknowledge the principle that Japan alone possesses the right to "control the destiny of and dominate" all the people (including the Englishmen) of the Far East. It should not be doubted that in case the territories of Great Britain in the Far East are attacked and the safety and well-being of the inhabitants of such territories endangered, Britain will defend them "with the utmost vigour." (to be continued)

General

File No. 3345

Abridged: London to Foreign Ministry

Despatched: 8 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) afternoon

Received: 9 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) evening

Jurisdiction: European Section

(Telegram No. 78 continued)

5. I would like to state further two points. The first point is that we, of course, have no objection to Japan's "dictating" her own policies, but we do not think that we will incur Japan's wrath if we, as a former friend and an old ally of Japan, state the following matter. That is, I hope and pray that the policy which Japan is now about to carry out would not lead to a "terrible disaster," and I cannot but wish that Japan would not, by cooperating with Germany and Italy, lose the sagacious prudence and the sound judgment which had enabled her to establish a great national strength and prosperity.

The second point is that with reference to the war situation, reports favorable to Great Britain are being suppressed in Japan, and that the idea that Britain is now a "decadent" nation on the verge of ruin is being circulated. But as your Excellency know, the true spirit of the British people at present is not so. Not only do the whole people of the entire British Empire hold an absolutely strongly united determination, but Britain possesses bountiful resources and enjoys the unlimited aid of the United States of America, such that it is clear that Britain will never lose in this war. Although the Germans exaggeratedly claim that they will be able to conquer our Island Empire, we firmly believe in their failure. We succeeded in averting the crisis last September.

Today Britain's power on land, sea and in air greatly exceed that of that time. It is the firm belief of the British people that Germany will fail in the attempt to conquer Great Britain and will also be defeated in the war.

End

General
Date No. 3341 In ciphers: London to Foreign Ministry

Despatched: 8 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) afternoon

Received: 9 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) evening

Jurisdiction: European Section

To: Foreign Minister MATSUOKA From: Ambassador SHIGEMITSU

No. 79

Ambassador: Will this representation be made in Tokyo also?

Eden: No, I wish to state it as my unserved opinion through you here.

Ambassador: I do not possess any data to prove that such a critical situation exists. Of course, under the present circumstances, I have no intention of criticizing the report of your Ambassador. However, I would like to be permitted to ask you a few questions from the impression I gained from your "expose," though I shall refrain from exchanging views regarding the detailed substance of it.

Eden: I shall hear them.

Ambassador: From what you have just said, I have received the impression that you have explained to me to make clear for the last time the standpoint of Great Britain under the premise that Anglo-Japanese relations are fast approaching the last stage. However, it is necessary for us to endeavour to the last, to avert the worst, even if no improvement can be made in the relations between the two countries. It is with this purpose in mind that I have done my best so far. In what you have told me just now, you have stated almost solely the unilateral view of Britain, but failed to show an attitude of Japan's assertions, making only refutations and indicating the intention of disapproval. Moreover, I think that, in discussing this unfortunate aggravation of Anglo-Japanese relations, we should commence it from at least ten years ago, if not from 1904. You thoroughly know the history of the past ten years. To cite an instance, you have mentioned in your explanation Japan's cooperation

with Britain's enemy, but Britain has consistently held the policy of aiding Japan's enemies. The fact is that present aggravations of relations actually came mostly from this point.
(to be continued)

General
File No. 3344 In Ciphers: London to Foreign Ministry

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(Telegram No. 79 continued)

Furthermore, it is geographically quite natural that Japan should hold the leading position in East Asia, and this cannot be helped. It is no different from the special interests which Britain and the United States of America feel in the neighboring geographically related countries. You have mentioned French Indo-China, and seemed to view our movements there, etc., with suspicion, but we have not invaded any British territory. It is beyond my comprehension that you should say that you are unable to understand the important interests, both political and economic, which arise from geographical position. In stating the crisis in Anglo-American relations, you do not try to understand the other party's standpoint, but rather find fault with the Japanese pol and lay the blame on Japan. Do you think that such an explanation will serve to avert the impending crisis?

Eden: My principal aim is to avert the crisis for the sake of the two countries, and nothing more. Having received such a report, I cannot overlook it, but will do everything possible. To your Excellency I have unbosomed myself and frankly informed you of our feelings with the intention of successfully coping with this critical situation. I should be glad to hear further from the Japanese government as to its views on today's conversations.

Ambassador: I to have spoken to you without reserve, but I have no intention to give my opinion in detail on the points mentioned by you today. Of course I shall transmit to my government what you have said. (End)

General

File No. 3338

In Ciphers: London to Foreign Ministry

Despatched: 8 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) afternoon

Received: 9 February 1941 (SHOWA 16) evening

Jurisdiction: European Section

To: Foreign Minister MATSUOKA From: Ambassador SHIGEMITSU

Telegram No. 80

In the conference with Foreign Minister Eden, which I mentioned in telegram No. 78, he explained that the report from Craigie pointed out, besides those matters, that Japan's relations with Germany and Italy were becoming "progressively" intimate, and that the German "hold" on Japan was growing tighter.

C E R T I F I C A T EI.P.S. No. 1131Statement of Source and Authenticity

I, HAYACHI Kaoru hereby certify that I am officially connected with the Japanese Government in the following capacity: Chief of the Archives Section Japanese Foreign Office and that as such official I have custody of the document hereto attached consisting of 14 pages, dated Feb., 1941, and described as follows: HANDWRITTEN COPIES OF TELEGRAMS COVERING EDEN-SHIGEMITSU CONVERSATIONS.

I further certify that the attached record and document is an official document of the Japanese Government, and that it is part of the official archives and files of the following named ministry or department (specifying also the file number or citation, if any, or any other official designation of the regular location of the document in the archives or files): Foreign Ministry

Signed at Tokyo on this
23rd day of Sept., 1946.

/s/ K. Hayashi
Signature of Official
SEAL.
Chief Archives Section
Official Capacity

Witness: /s/ Nagaharu OdoStatement of Official Procurement

I, Richard H. Larsh, hereby certify that I am associated with the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, and that the above described document was obtained by me from the above signed official of the Japanese Government in the conduct of my official business.

Signed at Tokyo on this
25 day of Sept., 1946.

/s/ Richard H. Larsh
NAME
Investigation Division I.P.S.
Official Capacity

Witness: /s/ T/L Toruchi